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FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, EUR/PGI (COOK), IO/UNP, IO/PPD, AND
IO (WARLICK)

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SUBJECT: ENGAGING THE CROATIANS ON THEIR UNSC MEMBERSHIP

REF: BRADTKE-COOK EMAIL

Classified By: Rick Holtzapple, POL/ECON, Reasons 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: While some key decisions affecting Croatia's UNSC membership, particularly on personnel, will have to await the outcome of Croatia's parliamentary elections on November 25, the basic lines of Croatia's approach are already becoming evident. We can expect President Mesic, who will be in office throughout Croatia's membership on the Council, to seek to play a large role in UNSC-related decision-making. Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry is working on creating the structures and naming the personnel that will coordinate input from the MFA, the Prime Minister, and the President on all UNSC questions. Also under consideration is naming of a new UN Perm Rep. On the UNSC, Foreign Ministry officials expect Croatia to be particularly active on regional issues such as Kosovo and/or Bosnia, advancing the ICTY's "exit strategy", and global anti-terrorism efforts, but we would also expect Mesic and his advisors to press for active Croatian involvement on Third World issues. Given Mesic's preference for engagement and dialogue, Iran sanctions may provide a troublesome issue for us. As it formulates positions at the UNSC, Croatia will be open to input from the US and the EU, and will pay close attention to the EU on those issues where the EU has an established Common Position. Post proposes a visit from IO in the first half of December, as soon as possible after Croatia's UNSC team is named, to assist the Croats in preparing for their term, and previewing what we expect will be key UNSC agenda items in the coming months. END SUMMARY.

A NEW "UNSC TEAM"

¶2. (C) With Croatian parliamentary elections scheduled for November 25, there are still many uncertainties about how Croatia will approach its UNSC membership. One key area of uncertainty is cooperation between President Mesic, whose mandate continues throughout the Croatian UNSC membership, and whoever leads the new government as Prime Minister. President Mesic and his chief foreign policy advisor Budimir Loncar, who played a key role in lobbying for the UNSC seat, have both made clear to the Ambassador that the President and his office will be closely involved in decision-making relating to the Security Council.

¶3. (C) Josko Klisovic, Chief of Staff at the Foreign Ministry, told POLOFF on October 26 that all Croatian decisions about its positions in the UNSC will require clearance from both the Government and the Presidency, given Croatia's constitutional requirements. Even on emergency items at the UNSC, he said, "the Perm Rep will have to make two phone calls;" one to the Prime Minister and one to the

President. Klisovic said that the Ministry would be establishing a special unit to manage the Security Council term, but that the exact structure and personnel involved are still under discussion.

¶4. (C/NF) Discussions are also underway over whether Croatian Perm Rep Mirjana Mladineo should remain in New York, or whether a more prominent political figure, perhaps even current FM Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, should be named to represent Croatia. While it is an open secret in Zagreb that the Foreign Minister will not return to her current position even if Prime Minister Sanader is re-elected, it is not clear that she would have President Mesic's support to go to New York. In a private conversation with the Ambassador, Presidential Advisor Loncar hinted that Mesic does not hold the Foreign Minister in high regard and sees her as too close to the Prime Minister. Mesic is more favorably disposed towards the current Perm Rep Mladineo, but there is speculation that former Perm Rep Ivan Simonovic will get the position, particularly if there is a Social Democratic win in the elections.

FOCUS ON SE EUROPE, ANTI-TERRORISM, BUT ALSO THIRD WORLD

¶5. (C) Croatia did not have specific policy objectives in mind when campaigning for a UNSC seat, but instead had sought the seat in order to raise its international stature generally and to show that it had successfully become a respected member of the international community. That said, Foreign Minstry officials expect that Croatia will be most engaged on UNSC issues related to Southeastern Europe. While Croatia hopes the UNSC could conclude deliberations on Kosovo's status in December, Klisovic and others have told us

ZAGREB 00000990 002 OF 002

that Croatia expects to be able to use its historical familiarity with the region to help inform any further UNSC deliberations. Croatia's decision to open an office in Pristina will help it be better informed of the situation there. PM Sanader has also publicly noted Croatia's national interest in seeing that the the ICTY fulfills its objectives, and Croatia will do all that it can on the UNSC to ensure implementation of the ICTY's completion strategy. In addition,Croatian officials have expressed interest in strengthening efforts to address terrorism.

¶6. (C) At the same time, we would expect President Mesic and his staff to take a greater interest in issues outside Europe. Mesic and his advisor Loncar, although supporters of Croatia's EU and NATO membership, see Croatia as inheriting the relationships created during Tito's policy of non-alignment. Mesic's meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during the UNGA and his visit last year to Havana as an observer at the Non-Aligned Summit suggest that issues in the Third World will attract the President's attention. In that context, Mesic is already considering whether to agree to a request from the Sudanese President to visit Croatia. Mesic's personal inclination towards "engagement" and "dialogue" may prove troublesome for the U.S. in dealing with a new Iran sanctions resolution.

KEEPING AN EYE ON US AND EU POSITIONS

¶7. (C/NF) On most UNSC issues, including Kosovo, we anticipate Croatia will be supportive of US and EU positions. Where the US and EU agree on an issue, the Croatians will be very reluctant to break ranks. Where the US and EU disagree, it will be hard for us to override the EU's position if the EU has formally adopted a Common Position on the issue at hand. We will have more influence in cases where the EU does not have consensus. When asked by the Ambassador whether Croatia would "take its orders" from Brussels, President Mesic smilingly replied that Croatia would "consult" with the EU but make its own decisions.

¶ 8. (C) How to best influence the Croatian position will depend in part on how the upcoming elections come out. If the HDZ wins and PM Sanader remains in office, he is likely to be more open to our arguments about the value of sanctions and diplomatic pressure on recalcitrant states than is President Mesic. While Mesic is a "non-partisan" actor, he is clearly close to the opposition SDP, and an SDP government would likely agree with his positions.

ENGAGING THE CROATIANS

¶ 9. (C) We understand that USUN has already suggested to the Croatians a visit to Washington by the Croatian UN Mission. With Croatia beginning to shadow the Council's activities later this month, we would suggest that such a visit not/not await the Croatian elections and the formation of a new government here. We would also suggest that a visit to Zagreb by an IO-led team take place in December, as soon as key personnel decisions have been made, such as the naming of the Foreign Ministry Coordinator. If Washington concurs, we would like to approach the Croatians now to pencil in such a visit for the week of December 10, pending confirmation that the GoC's UNSC team will be in place by that time.

BRADTKE